

ASPH Statement in Support of NIH Peer Review System

Washington, DC, October 31, 2003 - The Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) is concerned with reports that approximately 190 funded NIH research projects may go through intensive investigation at the request of special interest advocacy groups. We believe this inappropriate attention has been motivated by ideological interests and not by science or scientific opinion. ASPH believes that this type of selective scrutiny will severely impugn the world acclaimed independent peer review process that is the most critical element of the NIH's ability to conduct and support research. NIH funded research leads to an astonishing percentage of global advances in health care and disease prevention and the external peer review process is at the heart of funding decisions. ASPH firmly believes that there should be no intrusion into the NIH process of selecting meritorious grants for the public good through scientific research.

Funding for scientific research addressing recognized public health threats should not be determined by ideological concerns, political agendas or special interest groups. Rather, the NIH should be allowed to focus on the objective conduct of science, foster innovative research strategies and advance the nation's disease and public health knowledge. Funding decisions should be solely determined by the NIH's independent peer review system, whereby research grant and training applications undergo a rigorous, scientific merit review process. ASPH believes that Congress and the Administration should not allow the NIH independent peer review system to be exploited by special interest groups or ideological concerns.

The Association of Schools of Public Health is the only national organization representing the deans, faculty, and students of this nation's 33 accredited schools of public health, and accredited graduate programs in public health seeking accredited school status, in the United States and Puerto Rico. The 33 schools of public health constitute the primary source of comprehensively trained public health professionals and specialists in short supply to serve the federal government, the 50 states, and the private sector.

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